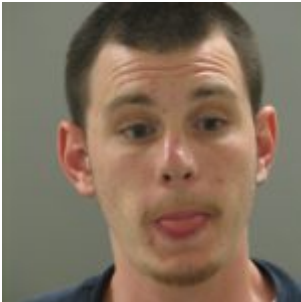


Troopers Arrest Pair Following a String of Robberies



Brian J. Branch



Michael A. Kolmonen

**Presented by Public Information Officer Master Corporal
Jeffrey R. Hale**

Newark, DE- Delaware State Police Robbery Unit detectives arrested two men and have charged them in connection with a string of armed robberies of pharmacies and convenience stores which have occurred throughout New Castle County since the beginning of August.

On Wednesday, September 21, 2016, members of the Delaware State Police Special Operations Response Team (S.O.R.T.) arrested Brian J. Branch, 28, of New Castle, and Michael A. Kolmonen, 28, of Wilmington, in a parking lot of a nearby Wawa shortly after Branch committed the armed robbery of the Walgreens Pharmacy located at 301 E. Pulaski Highway, Elkton, MD. Branch and Kolmonen, who was the operator of the car used in the robbery, were both taken into custody without

incident and subsequently transported to Troop 2, Glasgow.

Brian Branch was charged by detectives with seven counts of Robbery 1st Degree, two counts of Possession of a Deadly Weapon During the Commission of a Felony, nine counts of Possession of a Firearm by a Person Prohibited, six counts of Wearing a Disguise During the Commission of a Felony, four counts of Conspiracy 2nd Degree, two counts of Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Felony, and two counts of Aggravated Menacing. He was arraigned at JP Court 11 and committed to the Howard Young Correctional Institution in default of \$3,380,000.00 cash bail.

Michael A. Kolmonen was charged by detectives with three counts of Robbery 1st Degree, three counts of Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Felony, two counts of Wearing a Disguise During the Commission of a Felony, three counts of Conspiracy 2nd Degree, and Aggravated Menacing. He was also arraigned at JP Court 11 and committed to the Howard Young Correctional Institution in default of \$625,000.00 cash bail.

The investigation began in early August after detectives noticed a trend in robberies which had been occurring throughout New Castle County which mostly targeted pharmacies. They also discovered that the same type of incidents had occurred in Upper Chichester Township, PA, and in Cecil County, MD as well. Through a cooperative effort of multiple agencies including the New Castle County Police, the Cecil County Sheriff's Office, the Elkton Police Department, and the Upper Chichester Township Police Department, and after multiple interviews and other investigative means, troopers were able to positively identify Brian Branch and Michael Kolmonen as the suspects who were committing the robberies.

In each incident, a male suspect would enter the targeted business and display an unknown make and model handgun. He would then confront an employee of the business and demand

money from the cash registers. After receiving the money, the suspect would exit the building and flee the area in a waiting vehicle. There were no injuries in any of the incidents.

Delaware State Police and New Castle County Police detectives were able to link Branch and Kolmonen to the below list of robberies, however, more charges are expected.

1. Walgreens, 19 Marrows Road, Newark, on Monday, August 22, 2016 (NCCPD)
2. Walgreens, 2719 Pulaski Highway, Newark, on Thursday, September 1, 2016
3. CVS, 1545 Pulaski Highway, Bear, on Tuesday, September 13, 2016
4. Dunkirk Liquors, 2 Dunlinden Dr., Wilmington, on Wednesday, September 14, 2016 (NCCPD)
5. Walgreens, 1508 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, on Friday, September 16, 2016
6. Walgreens, 1120 Pulaski Highway, Bear, on Sunday, September 18, 2016

Please contact the Cecil County Sheriff's Department, the Elkton Police Department, and the Upper Chichester Township Police Department for specific details in reference to the robberies which occurred in their jurisdictions.

If anyone has any information in reference to this incident they are asked to contact Det. Jonathon Packard at 302-365-8434. Information may also be provided by calling [Delaware Crime Stoppers](https://www.delawarecrimestoppers.com) at 1-800-TIP-3333, via the internet at www.delaware.crimestoppersweb.com, or by sending an anonymous tip by text to 274637 (CRIMES) using the keyword "DSP."

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